

The Writing Assessment

The NAEP writing assessment measures three purposes of writing: narrative, informative, and persuasive. The narrative tasks comprise first-person and third-person fictional stories. The informative tasks comprise description, explanation, and analysis. The persuasive tasks comprise writing to convince, writing to construct an argument, and writing to refute a position.

Across the three purposes for writing, students are asked to respond in a variety of forms. These forms include essays, letters, reports, stories, and articles. Some tasks require students to write for a specified audience; for example, to a teacher, to a committee, or to a friend. Writing tasks in the 2006 assessment incorporate an array of stimulus materials, such as color photographs, comic strips, newspaper articles, and poems.

Each student participating in the assessment will receive one test booklet. At grade 8, students will receive two 25-minute writing tasks. All booklets contain a Planning Page, thus providing students with the opportunity to make notes and organize their ideas. In addition, all participating students are provided with a writing strategies brochure to remind them of various ways to plan and review their writing. For more information regarding the writing assessment framework please visit <http://nagb.org>.

NAEP Writing Framework Distribution of Time to Be Spent on Tasks for Each Writing Purpose

	Grade 8
Narrative	33%
Informative	33%
Persuasive	33%

Writing Booklet Directions

Sections 1 and 2 each contain one writing assignment. You will have 25 minutes to complete each assignment.

In each section, read the page that tells you your writing assignment. Then go on to the planning page where you can make notes and plan what to write. Do not write your paper on the planning page. After the planning page, there are lined pages where you should write your paper.

The following example shows what these pages look like.

The diagram illustrates the layout of a writing booklet with three pages shown in a staggered, overlapping fashion:

- Page 2:** A large rectangular box containing the text "Your assignment is to write about . . ." at the top and "Page 2" at the bottom.
- Page 3:** A rectangular box overlapping the right side of Page 2. It contains the heading "PLANNING PAGE" followed by instructions: "Using this page to make notes and organize your ideas. You may want to use suggestions from the *Ideas for Planning Your Writing* in the brochure to help you get started." Below this is the instruction "DO NOT WRITE YOUR RESPONSE ON THIS PAGE." and "Page 3" at the bottom.
- Page 4:** A rectangular box overlapping the right side of Page 3. It contains the instruction "BEGIN WRITING YOUR RESPONSE ON THIS PAGE" at the top, followed by ten horizontal lines for writing, and "Page 4" at the bottom.

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

Remember to start writing your papers on the lined pages that begin on page 4 of each section that has a writing assignment.

For each assignment, you will probably need all of the 25 minutes to plan and write. Use as many lined pages as you need to write your paper. You may want to use ideas from the brochure you have been given to help you plan and review your paper.

If you finish before time is called, read your paper again and make any changes that you think will make it better.

Do not go past the  sign at the end of each section until you are told to do so.



Grade 8 Sample Writing Prompts

Writing Prompt 1 (with sample response)

Informative: Save a Book

For *Save a Book*, students were asked to explain what book they would save by memorization if they lived in a society where reading was not allowed. Since any book could be chosen, a wide range of responses was acceptable. In this booklet we provide a sample of an “Excellent” response.

A novel written in the 1950’s describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won’t be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations

Sample “Excellent” Response

“Excellent” responses provided well-chosen details and exhibited sentence variety and precise word choices across the response. In the sample response below, consistently well-chosen detail is provided to support his or her views about *The Giver*. The response is very well organized, with strong transitions. The student’s choice of words and comfort with varied sentence structure add power to his or her insights about the importance of books and reading. The “Excellent” rating was given to 4 percent of the responses to this task.

Sample "Excellent" Response

If I could only save one book, I would save The Giver by Lois Lowry. The Giver is one of my favorite books. I think it would benefit future generations, because it shows human faults, gives hope, and it models the "real-life" situation.

The Giver is about a very secluded community of people. The government chooses spouses, children, jobs, and determines every course of everyone's lives, except for the Receiver of Memory. He or she alone has all the knowledge of the past. The Receiver can see in color, feels true pain, recognizes animals, he or she holds the world's history in his or her mind. The people of old had chosen to give up color, weather, choosing. Everything was a state of "sameness." Everyone believes everything the government says, everyone follows the rules. This shows how gullible and dependent the human race truly is. To lead an entire community by the nose for countless generations is

Sample "Excellent" Response (Continued)

amazing, and the people themselves had chosen their fate.

Even though this book tells of a very deprived community it does give hope. Jonas, the protagonist, and Gabriel, his adoptive brother, run away from this community. After many days of running from the searching of the community. Jonas hears something. He hears music. Singing and music were not allowed in the community. When Jonas hears the singing he remembers a memory he had received. It was a memory of love. The book closes with Jonas riding towards the new community he sees radiating love.

This book is also very similar to the situation presented. Although there are books, they are not read. Reading for pleasure is simply not done. Books open passages for people. They shed light

Sample “Excellent” Response (Continued)

on different countries, culture, ideas, and much more. Jonas's community is so sheltered. None of the ordinary citizens can remember a time of choosing of differentness. Everything is the same for everyone. If these people had had books, then they would have known what they were missing. They could have felt true emotions and really lived the life they were Given.

The Giver is an outstanding book. It has morals, a story, and is very realistic. If I could I would save The Giver.

Writing Prompt 2
Persuasive: Music Labels

Recently, the music industry started to put rating labels on record albums, compact discs, and tapes. These labels describe the content and language of the music. A local committee is considering a rating label law that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to buy recordings with negative ratings.

Write a letter to the committee telling whether or not you think that negative rating labels should be used to restrict teenagers from buying certain music. Give specific reasons to support your opinion.

Student Background Questionnaire

General Directions for Grade 8

In the next two sections, you will be asked questions about yourself and your education. The choices for some questions will be written across the page as shown. Fill in the oval for the best answer.

Example 1

	Never or hardly ever	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day
1. How often do you watch movies on TV?	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D

You should have filled in the oval below the answer that best tells how often you watch movies on TV.

The choices for some questions will be written down the page as shown. Now read Example 2 and indicate your answer.

Example 2

2. Which event would you prefer to attend?
<input type="radio"/> A basketball game
<input type="radio"/> B car show
<input type="radio"/> C concert
<input type="radio"/> D play

Make your answer mark clear and dark in the oval. If you make a mistake or want to change your answer, be sure to completely erase any unwanted marks.

Do not go past the  sign at the end of each section until you are told to do so.

If you finish before time is called, go back and check your work on that section only. Use your time carefully. Do as much as you can in each section.



Student Background Questionnaire

In this section, please tell us about yourself and your family. The section has 13 questions. Mark your answers in your booklet.

VB331330

1. Are you Hispanic or Latino? Fill in **one or more ovals**.

- ☐ Ⓐ No, I am not Hispanic or Latino.
- ☐ Ⓑ Yes, I am Mexican, Mexican American, or Chicano.
- ☐ Ⓒ Yes, I am Puerto Rican or Puerto Rican American.
- ☐ Ⓓ Yes, I am Cuban or Cuban American.
- ☐ Ⓔ Yes, I am from some other Hispanic or Latino background.

VB331331

2. Which of the following best describes you? Fill in **one or more ovals**.

- ☐ Ⓐ White
- ☐ Ⓑ Black or African American
- ☐ Ⓒ Asian
- ☐ Ⓓ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Ⓔ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

For the rest of the questions in this section, fill in only **one** oval for each question.

VB331333

3. Does your family get a newspaper at least four times a week?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C I don't know.

VB331334

4. Does your family get any magazines regularly?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C I don't know.

VB331335

5. About how many books are there in your home?

☐ A Few (0–10)
☐ B Enough to fill one shelf (11–25)
☐ C Enough to fill one bookcase (26–100)
☐ D Enough to fill several bookcases (more than 100)

VB331336

6. Is there a computer at home that you use?

☐ A Yes
☐ B No

VB331337

7. Is there an encyclopedia in your home? It could be a set of books, or it could be on the computer.

☐ A Yes
☐ B No
☐ C I don't know.

TB001101

8. About how many pages a day do you have to read in school and for homework?

☐ A 5 or fewer
☐ B 6–10
☐ C 11–15
☐ D 16–20
☐ E More than 20

VB331339

9. How often do you talk about things you have studied in school with someone in your family?

☐ A Never or hardly ever
☐ B Once every few weeks
☐ C About once a week
☐ D Two or three times a week
☐ E Every day

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE 

VB331447

10. How many days were you absent from school in the last month?

- Ⓐ None
- Ⓑ 1 or 2 days
- Ⓒ 3 or 4 days
- Ⓓ 5 to 10 days
- Ⓔ More than 10 days

VB331451

13. How often do people in your home talk to each other in a language other than English?

- Ⓐ Never
- Ⓑ Once in a while
- Ⓒ About half of the time
- Ⓓ All or most of the time

VB330870

11. How far in school did your mother go?

- Ⓐ She did not finish high school.
- Ⓑ She graduated from high school.
- Ⓒ She had some education after high school.
- Ⓓ She graduated from college.
- Ⓔ I don't know.

VB330871

12. How far in school did your father go?

- Ⓐ He did not finish high school.
- Ⓑ He graduated from high school.
- Ⓒ He had some education after high school.
- Ⓓ He graduated from college.
- Ⓔ I don't know.



Student Background Questionnaire

Writing—Grade 8

This section has 13 questions. Mark your answers in your booklet. Fill in only **one** oval for each question.

VB345622

1. Please indicate how much you DISAGREE or AGREE with the following statements about reading and writing. Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. When I read books, I learn a lot.	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
b. Reading is one of my favorite activities.	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
c. Writing things like stories or letters is one of my favorite activities.	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
d. Writing helps me share my ideas.	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D

VB379288

2. How often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day
a. Read for fun on your own time	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
b. Talk with your friends or family about something you have read	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
c. Write e-mails to your friends or family	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

VB345665

3. How often do you write each of the following **for school** this year? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	At least once a week
a. Thoughts or observations in a log or journal	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
b. A simple summary of something you have read	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
c. A report about something that you have studied or researched	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
d. An essay in which you analyze or interpret something	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
e. A letter or essay in which you try to convince or persuade others to believe or do something	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
f. A story (such as a story about a personal or imagined experience)	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
g. Business writing (such as a resume or letter to a company)	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D



VB378055

4. When you write a paper or report **for school** this year, how often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Almost always
a. Brainstorm with other students to decide what to write about	(A)	(B)	(C)
b. Organize your paper before you write (for example, make an outline, draw a chart)	(A)	(B)	(C)
c. Make changes to your paper to fix mistakes and improve your paper	(A)	(B)	(C)
d. Work with other students in pairs or small groups to discuss and improve your paper	(A)	(B)	(C)

VB378060

5. When you write a paper or report **for school** this year, how often do you do each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	Sometimes	Almost always
a. Use a computer from the beginning to write the paper or report (for example, use a computer to write the first draft)	(A)	(B)	(C)
b. Use a computer to make changes to the paper or report (for example, spell-check, cut and paste)	(A)	(B)	(C)
c. Look for information on the Internet to include in the paper or report	(A)	(B)	(C)

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

VB378126

6. Think about the classes that you are taking this year. How often do you write something that is **at least a paragraph in length** for each of the following classes? Include things you write such as journal writing, reports, investigations, and essays. Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Never or hardly ever	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	At least once a week
a. English class	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
b. Science class	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
c. Social studies or history class	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D
d. Math class	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> B	<input type="radio"/> C	<input type="radio"/> D

VB345715

7. For school this year, how often have you been asked to write long answers to questions on tests or assignments that involved reading?

- ☐ A Never
- ☐ B Once or twice this year
- ☐ C Once or twice a month
- ☐ D At least once a week

VB378054

8. When you write, how often does your teacher talk to you about what you are writing?

- ☐ A Never
- ☐ B Sometimes
- ☐ C Always



VB378131

9. When you write, how often does your teacher ask you to write more than one draft of a paper?

- ☐ Ⓐ Never
- ☐ Ⓑ Sometimes
- ☐ Ⓒ Always

VB429583

10. When your teacher grades your writing, how important is each of the following? Fill in **one** oval on each line.

	Not very important	Moderately important	Very important
a. Your spelling, punctuation, and grammar	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
b. The way your paper is organized	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
c. The quality and creativity of your ideas	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ
d. The length of your paper	<input type="radio"/> Ⓐ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓑ	<input type="radio"/> Ⓒ

VB595182

11. How hard was this test compared to most other tests you have taken this year in school?

- ☐ Ⓐ Easier than other tests
- ☐ Ⓑ About as hard as other tests
- ☐ Ⓒ Harder than other tests
- ☐ Ⓓ Much harder than other tests

VC034559

12. How hard did you try on this test compared to how hard you tried on most other tests you have taken this year in school?

- ☐ Ⓐ Not as hard as on other tests
- ☐ Ⓑ About as hard as on other tests
- ☐ Ⓒ Harder than on other tests
- ☐ Ⓓ Much harder than on other tests

VB595184

13. How important was it to you to do well on this test?

- ☐ Ⓐ Not very important
- ☐ Ⓑ Somewhat important
- ☐ Ⓒ Important
- ☐ Ⓓ Very important

